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SIPDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR UNTERMAYER FOR NSC FRANCES TOWNSEND;
NEA/ARPI FOR SHAWN THORNE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/25/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [QA](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR NSC FRANCES TOWNSEND'S JUNE 2,
2005 VISIT TO QATAR

Classified By: Ambassador Chase Untermeyer for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

1. (C) Let me extend a warm welcome to you from me and the team at Embassy Doha. Your visit fulfills a pledge President Bush made to the Emir last April for you to visit Qatar to explore enhanced counterterrorism cooperation. To that end, we have requested meetings with the Emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (addressed as "Your Highness"); the Heir Apparent, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (also addressed as "Your Highness"); the Minister of State for Interior, Sheikh Abdulla bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani (addressed as "Your Excellency" or "Sheikh Abdulla"); and the head of Qatari Security Services, Nassir Al-Ali ("Your Excellency").

2. (S) The Heir Apparent, Sheikh Tamim, has been increasingly invested with oversight and authority in the area of internal security. You will find him to be open and forthright in discussing Qatari shortcomings and needs in the security area. He may also express his disappointment that the U.S. did not immediately issue a public condemnation the March 19 terrorist bombing in Doha. (FBI Director Mueller called Sheikh Tamim on March 25 to offer condolences and assistance.) He will likely describe the intensive security preparations underway for the G-77 summit that will take place two weeks after your visit. You will also find Sheikh Tamim and the ministers openly looking to the U.S. for training and advice as Qatar seeks to improve its own internal security operations.

3. (S) During your meetings, you should express appreciation for the support Qatar extends to the U.S., in particular by hosting CENTCOM's forward headquarters and allowing use of bases in Qatar to conduct military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Specific issues to raise in talking point format:

-- The U.S. stands ready to assist Qatar to develop its counterterrorism capabilities. I welcome your ideas on how we can be best be of assistance to you in this regard.

-- Particularly interested in hearing about your security plans for securing Qatar's oil and gas facilities, and about your preparations for the Asian games.

-- In general, we believe our cooperation is excellent, but there is more we can do. On several occasions in recent months we have passed to your security services information about individuals with links to terrorism who are in Qatar or are traveling through Qatar. In some cases we have asked you to take these individuals into custody, but you did not do so. We can do better in this regard.

-- One important request I have to make is for your cooperation to remove certain American citizens residing in Qatar who we want to bring to the U.S. to face criminal charges. You do not want these people in your country, and neither do we.

-- The Federal Bureau of Investigation has established a Legal Attache office at the Embassy in Doha, as His Highness the Emir requested. This is a sign of our desire to work more closely with Qatar on law enforcement matters. A good next step would be for the U.S. and Qatar to sign a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty.

4. (U) What follows is an overview of key current issues in Qatar.

5. (S) The Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, is working to cement a broad strategic partnership with the U.S. Al-Jazeera's inflammatory broadcasting, however, continues to cast a dark shadow over otherwise robust military, economic and diplomatic cooperation. Security issues have become increasingly important to Qatari leadership in the wake of March 19 terrorist bombing in Doha and as Qatar prepares for next month's G-77 Summit and the Asian Games in December, 2006. Qatar actively seeks U.S. advice and assistance to augment its anti-terrorism capabilities.

Doha's Terrorist Attack

16. (S) Foreign and Qatari residents alike were shocked by the March 19 bombing of a British-run amateur theater. Had the terrorist bomber struck five minutes earlier, there is a strong likelihood that 40 to 60 people would have been killed; it was a powerful explosion. Qatari officials, prominent business leaders, and religious figures all condemned the attack. The only public demonstration in Qatar in the last 12 months occurred March 21 when several thousand Qataris gathered to condemn the attack and expressed support for the expatriate community. The investigation continues, and the government's public line is that the bomber Omar Ali, a long-time Egyptian resident of Qatar, acted alone. Business activity has not been hindered; the GOQ signed several large investment deals in April and May and business leaders remain focused on the country's enormous potential. Reports of non-renewal of Egyptian, Jordanian, and other third-country work permits may be tied to security measures taken following the attack. Under-cover security forces are present around town, perhaps in preparation for the June 12-16 G77 Summit here.

Iraq

17. (S) Qatar has been a pillar of support for our efforts in Iraq. We continue, for instance, to fly unimpeded combat missions out of Al-Udeid Air Base. The Emir shares our view that restoration of order and a successful democratic transition are of paramount importance not only to Iraq but to the region. However, there is some feeling that Qatar's efforts over the past two years are not fully appreciated in Washington. The GOQ is holding back on forgiving Iraqi debt because of Washington's pressure to soften Al Jazeera programming. While the Foreign Minister has expressed concerns of civil war in Iraq, he has stated publicly that the coalition needs to stay in the country to establish wider security. The GOQ also points to the importance of establishing a power structure in Baghdad that is fully inclusive of the Sunni bloc.

Terrorism/Terrorist Financing

18. (S) Qatar has been a full and responsive partner in our campaigns against terrorism and terrorist financing. Qatar actively seeks U.S. advice and assistance to augment its anti-terrorism capabilities, strengthen relevant laws, and enhance intelligence exchange. In particular, the GOQ is interested in joint exercises, counterterrorism training, information sharing, combating organized crime and money laundering, and setting up a regional police training center. The FBI is scheduled to do a one-week Terrorist Financing and Money Laundering course in June; one was also completed in October 2004. However, an FBI training assessment concluded that Qatar would best benefit from an integrated training program rather than multiple courses; the MOI has responded favorably. FBI intends to offer a two- to three-year year program to raise the skill level of officers in a number of disciplines and provide exposure to new critical areas such as cyber crimes, securities fraud, and internet crimes. DS/ATA has an active and robust training program in Qatar. The focus of most of the courses for the past two years have been in counter-terrorism and preparing Qatar for the 2006 Asian Games.

Political and Education Reform

19. (S) Qatar's own program of reform, launched by the Emir after he assumed power in 1995, took a significant step forward in June when a constitution was officially promulgated. The constitution calls for elections of a national advisory council consisting of 45 elected and 15 appointed members. The election is expected to take place by mid 2006; the current appointed advisory council will dissolve at the end of June 2005 as stipulated by constitution. Qatari women will have the right to vote and will be encouraged by the government to run for office. In municipal elections in 1999 and 2003, women here were the first in the Gulf region to cast votes.

110. (S) Education reform, headed by the Emir's wife, Sheikha Mozza, is becoming a showcase. This reform includes a sweeping revamp of Qatar's pre-university and higher education system based on Rand Corporation recommendations. As part of this effort, Qatar has brought to Qatar's "Education City" branch campuses of Texas A&M University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Carnegie-Mellon, and the Weill-Cornell Medical College. Georgetown University signed an agreement to open a branch campus in September 2005. These have been ground-breaking efforts that have been hailed by

many as models for other states in the region.

Economic Issues

11. (U) Qatar's economy is the fastest growing in the world, at 20.5% for 2004. Per capita income is nearing \$40,000, putting it on par with the U.S. and within the top five richest by that measure. Qatar's primary accomplishment in the past 10 years has been becoming a leading supplier of liquefied natural gas. Under the leadership of Minister of Energy and Industry Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, Qatar Petroleum is moving on all fronts to maximize utilization of Qatar's natural resources to diversify the economy and provide business and employment opportunities to Qataris. Since 1999, there has been \$60 billion in foreign investment in Qatar's energy sector, about \$40 billion of it coming from U.S. companies. Qatar plans to invest \$70 billion in the natural gas sector over the next seven years.

12. (U) The GOQ estimates Qatar's oil reserves are at 14.6 billion barrels. Qatar's daily average production is currently estimated to be 850,000 barrels per day; at current production rates, oil reserves are expected to last about 60 years. Qatar's goal is to increase overall production capacity to over 1 million bpd by 2006. Occidental and Anadarko are the two U.S. companies operating in this sector.

13. (U) The majority of Qatar's current development in the energy sector is focused on its natural gas reserves. Qatar's North Field contains 14.7% of world natural gas reserves, estimated at 900 trillion cubic feet. The industrial development of the energy sector has created a boom atmosphere, with firms already here increasing staffing, and new firms energetically seeking to participate.

14. (U) Qatar signed a Trade and Investment Framework agreement with the U.S. in March 2004, but has watched neighbors Bahrain, Oman, and UAE move faster toward achieving Free Trade Agreements. Qatar's obstacles are trade restrictions that favor Qatari-owned businesses, labor standards that do not conform to international standards, sectors such as telecom and financial services which are closed to foreign investment.

Al-Jazeera

15. (S) Al-Jazeera remains a blight on our robust cooperation that is impacting an increasing number of areas. In response to our repeated protests and appeals, Al-Jazeera's management claims to reduced the air time given to Al-Qaeda and kidnappers' videos, and have made efforts to address the inflammatory nature of its reporting from Iraq. A new board of directors was appointed last year, and a number of personnel changes have been made. Al-Jazeera points to its recently introduced code of ethics, a new quality control committee, and 3-person editorial board as part of an effort toward greater journalistic professionalism. The channel has highlighted to us its coverage of pro-democracy movements in Lebanon and Egypt as well as broader coverage of Middle Eastern politics. Al Jazeera Managing Director told the Ambassador, "If the Americans want to find a proper partner in its effort to get democracy and reform, they won't find a better one than Al Jazeera." Ambassador has worked with Foreign Minister and Al Jazeera senior management to implement a 4-page list of improvements in the channel's broadcasts.

16. (S) FBIS monitoring indicated a period of fairly balanced coverage earlier this year, with the most recent report showing a regression from this positive trend. Most recently, a CENTCOM report suggested that Al Jazeera had prior knowledge of a border control post in Afghanistan. When questioned about the report, the channel's Managing Director told the Ambassador that the incident had been investigated and that there had been no breach of journalistic ethics; the stringer had responded quickly to the attack because he had been based only 60 kilometers from it. Nevertheless, the Managing Director promised, "If there are any problems, I will correct them."

17. (S) During the Ambassador's May 2005 visit to Washington, the consensus of opinion among USG agencies monitoring Al-Jazeera is that the station has shown some signs of improved broadcasting but still remains unacceptably sloppy in its journalist practices and in its anti-American editorial bent.

UNTERMEYER